

American Christmas

When my ancestors fled by boat, they writhed in storms for months at sea. They left their baby born too soon

to the cold Atlantic depths, dropped their old home- country ways for a hardscrabble life.

Gathering with neighbors for celebrations, they learned new tastes—leek pie, moussaka, borscht.

For generations, our family gave small gifts—most hoped for: an orange in the toe of the Christmas stocking.

Some years we took in students for room and board.
Helga, Kaykay, Miep, and Hi-Soon whose sister was burned

by napalm. Each taught us the flavors of their favorite family dishes brought to our long table.

Now at Christmas, we bake traditional cookies to share with neighbors:
Russian tea cakes, Scottish shortbread,

Armenian almond paste wreaths, Chinese hang-yen-bang with whole almonds held in place by egg yolk wash.

A favorite is Helga's German gingerbread santas with stiff white frosting and red cinnamon eyes.

Patricia Wixon